

Ana Rosa
Education Committee Testimony

Regarding School Construction Funds for Charter School & Support for HB 5283 & SB 229

Friday, March 4th, 2022

Good evening Chairs Sanchez and McCrory and other distinguished members of the Education Committee.

My name is Ana Rosa and I am a Waterbury resident as well as the Operations Manager at Common Ground High School in New Haven and member of the Board of Directors at Brass City Charter School in Waterbury. I am here today to address the long standing inequities in our state's public education system as well as to express my frustration with Governor Lamont's proposed FY 23 budget adjustments.

These last two years have been very difficult for all of our students, educators, and families. Between the uncertainty of whether we'll have a full week of school, the immense loss that so many families are dealing with, and the struggles that have come with all the different kinds of learning, it's been very clear that districts that are adequately funded have always had an advantage and districts that are chronically underfunded have always been at a disadvantage. This is why it is critical for CT to establish a single student-centered funding formula and fully fund ECS! The federal ARP ESSER funds have been able to keep our schools afloat but with them quickly running out and the state needs to step in and fully fund ECS prior to 2025 so that our students do not lose the critical resources that have been put in place over the past two years. With federal funds we have been able to obtain chromebooks for each of our students, new desks, along with other necessary classroom supplies that otherwise would have been difficult to obtain.

Another major challenge facing our charter schools is the lack of access to funding for the maintenance and improvement of our facilities. Operating safe school buildings is a necessity for educating our state's children, especially while our state continues to battle the COVID-19 pandemic. Charter schools do not receive facilities funding from the state and as a result, charter schools at times may find themselves forced to use money that should go toward instruction and programming for facilities instead. This has to change. With funding geared towards maintenance, charter schools such as Common Ground High School and BCCS may be able to install a very much needed elevator to accommodate those with wheelchair access needs and/or replace an old roof. These are ways of how facilities funding would improve not just our facilities, but our ability to better serve our students without having to worry about where the funds will come from.

Lastly, I was saddened to see that the funding for a Danbury charter school was again left out of the budget. Danbury families have been fighting since 2018 to open their school. The needs of these students cannot continue to be deferred to a later date. Please pass a budget that supports Danbury students and families.

I ask this committee to please continue your support of all public schools and the children they serve by passing a budget that includes student-centered funding, increased access to facilities funds for charter schools, and funding to open the Danbury charter school. Do not approve a budget that excludes what charter school students and families deserve. Thank you for your time.

Thank you.

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